

Committee on Resources

Subcommittee on National Parks and Public Lands

Testimony

Statement In Support of S. 548
Before the Committee on Resources
Subcommittee on National Parks and Public Lands
United States House of Representatives
Jean T. Ward, Director
Metropolitan Park District of the Toledo Area
November 4, 1999

Good morning. My name is Jean Ward and I am director of the Metropolitan Park District of the Toledo Area. In the bill before you the Metropark District is to be the management entity of the Fallen Timbers Battlefield.

I'm here representing our governing body, the Board of Park Commissioners, three community-oriented local citizens - Board President Susan Horvath, Vice-President Jack Gallon and Vice-President Larry Sykes -- who have whole-heartedly endorsed the Park District's involvement in the preservation and development of the Fallen Timbers Battlefield as a national historic site. Their solid commitment to assuming responsibility for the battlefield is formally assured in a resolution which is entered into the record with this statement.

We're all extremely excited about the prospects for preserving the Fallen Timbers Battlefield and the Metropark District is prepared to accept the lead in being responsible for the site.

Others before you today are more appropriate to speak to the special historical significance of the Fallen Timbers Battlefield. I come before you today to tell you who we are and why we are the logical management entity for the site.

There's a phrase we've been using for some time that seems to best sum up who we are at the Metroparks. It seems especially appropriate to use it here before you. In this instance it takes on even more clarity and significance in its meaning.

Metroparks of the Toledo Area are to Lucas County, Ohio, what the National Parks are to the nation. That really says it all. We are a local government agency charged with preserving and conserving the best natural areas in our jurisdiction-Lucas County - for public understanding and enjoyment.

Through our nearly 75 years of existence that charge has grown to include preservation of significant historic sites, as well. Our Miami and Erie Canal Restoration, for example, with its mule-drawn canal boat, working original lock, and working historic mill is the only site like it in the country. As Representative Kaptur and Senator DeWine can attest, we operate quality facilities that are in great demand and widely recognized as models for facilities in other Park Districts. Community surveys show that over 98 percent of our constituents believe we do a good job. The work our staff has done on programs, graphics, publications

and facilities has won numerous local, state, regional and national awards. We are a tax-supported agency that has enjoyed widespread support and approval from local voters - our last levy passed by a 73 percent margin. It is the proceeds of that levy that will be used to provide the local funding share for developing and operating the site.

Our interests as an agency are vitally intertwined with the future of the Fallen Timbers Battlefield. One of our most popular Metroparks - 600 acre Side Cut Metropark (is located just across a highway - the Anthony Wayne Trail -- from the battlefield. The Wabash-Cannonball Trail - a rails-to-trails project in which we are a partner - has its eastern terminus at the battlefield. Most significantly, Metroparks already operate and maintain the Ohio Historical Society's Fallen Timbers Monument site located on what was once thought to be the site of the battlefield, overlooking Side Cut Metropark and the floodplain of the Maumee River.

I can assure you that the battlefield preservation enjoys widespread local support and is supported directly by a number of groups and agencies including the cities of Toledo and Maumee, the American Indian Intertribal Association, the Fallen Timbers Battlefield Preservation Commission, Heidelberg College and others. The effort also has the solid support of our community's local daily newspaper, The Blade.

The Metropark District was a catalyst in bringing together many diverse organizations and groups for the extensive commemoration that celebrated the 200th anniversary of the battle in 1994. Of particular significance was the relationship we forged with Native Americans whose ancestors fought for their homeland in the battle. At those bicentennial ceremonies the American Indian tribes that fought at the Battle of Fallen Timbers were formally recognized for the

first time. Today we continue to work closely with these groups in presenting cultural programming that encourages greater understanding among all of us.

Our initial concepts for the site which have been developed in consultation with other local partners, and which I would be happy to share with any or all of you in more detail, call for measured development. The 185-acre existing site is presently in agricultural use with a substantial stand of mixed second-growth woodlands coursed by ravines. It's a very attractive site with enormous potential. Our initial goal is to open the site with basic visitor services including parking, restrooms and an orientation structure. As time passes we intend to add an information center that would serve as a focal point for displays and programming, and to add interpretive graphics along the established trails to enhance visitors understanding of the events of August 20, 1794. Though the major thrust will be to encourage visitors to appreciate and understand the battle, it will also be a very pleasant site to take a walk and enjoy the beauty of the Maumee River Valley. The battlefield's National Park Affiliated Unit Status is linked to nearby Fort Miamis, a site already protected and held in public ownership by the city of Maumee. The Park District is committed to funneling assistance from the National Park Service to that site as well, though it will remain under city ownership.

In summary, Metroparks goals and objectives include the quality operation of sites like the Fallen Timbers Battlefield. Our agency enjoys overwhelming public support. We have considerable successful experience in forging partnerships to achieve goals. We have a talented staff that, with the promised input from the National Park Service and that of our local partners in preservation, I am extremely confident in assuring this committee that the battlefield will be regarded as a national asset.

We would be proud to operate a facility carrying the National Park Service logo, and I assure you we are in a position to operate the site at a level commiserate with the high expectations certain to accompany this

national designation. I assure you we'll make you proud that you've entrusted us with this responsibility.

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